

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
20508**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
DECEMBER 16, 2002**

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**United States and Brunei Darussalam Sign Bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement**

WASHINGTON - U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick and Brunei Darussalam's Minister of Trade and Natural Resources Pehin Dato Abdul Rahman Taib signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement today at the Blair House to enhance trade and investment between the two countries.

"This TIFA will enhance trade between our nations and demonstrates our commitment to supporting Brunei Darussalam as it seeks to diversify its economy," said Zoellick. "We are pleased with Brunei Darussalam's positive response to President Bush's Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative, as demonstrated by their quick action to conclude a TIFA. We look forward to working closely with Brunei Darussalam to further strengthen our economic relationship bilaterally and with ASEAN."

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) creates a Joint Council to expand and liberalize trade and investment, including in such areas as intellectual property, information and communications technology, biotechnology policy, tourism, enhancing the participation of small- and medium-sized enterprises in trade and investment, and capacity building. The two sides also agreed to coordinate in regional and multilateral fora, including in working toward the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda.

The ministers directed their staffs to form the Joint Council and to move ahead to begin implementing the work program contained in the Agreement. The United States has TIFAs with a number of countries in order to enhance bilateral trade ties and coordinate regionally and multilaterally through regular senior-level discussions on trade and economic issues. In addition to the TIFA signed with Brunei Darussalam today, within ASEAN the United States has TIFAs with Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

Under the Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI), the United States offered the prospect of bilateral free trade agreements with ASEAN countries that are committed to the economic reforms and openness inherent in an FTA. The United States and each ASEAN partner would jointly determine if and when they are ready to launch FTA negotiations. Progress in addressing

bilateral trade issues under these TIFAs will allow us to clear away the underbrush and to enter FTA negotiations with greater confidence that we can conclude them successfully.

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